

Juggling

While politicians in the backrooms argue about who gets the nod from World Sailing to host world championship events, the sailors are more interested in gravitating to anywhere that they think they can find some good sailboat racing. As the top IRC events like the Fastnet sell out in minutes, this year's ORC world and European championships also look as if they are heading for new attendance records, even with two events that are too close in time and too far apart in distance for teams to compete in both.

The growing size of these fleets prompted ORC and the organisers in Kiel in 2014 to increase class divisions to three from two to maintain a fairer racecourse... having 60 boats on a startline for an inshore race may be fun for the photographers, but it can be a headache for everyone else.

Then last year new splits using CDLs (a combination of rated length and rated speed upwind) rather than GPH were introduced to try to even things out further between long/old/heavy and short/modern/light. The initiative met with mixed results: the advantage is that using CDL gives fixed targets for everyone to know what class they fit into – while also knowing exactly where to aim at for optimisation, as explained by Maurizio Cossutti last month. The downside is that organisers no longer have flexibility to shift class

In Class A the fleet is smaller than at typical Mediterranean venues simply because there are fewer big boats competing in northern Europe, and to ship a boat to Denmark mid-season is both expensive and also knocks out several weeks of racing. Nonetheless, one entry that stands out as a firm bet in Class A is *Vision Future* from France, who have been competing successfully in both IRC and ORC on their GP42 in the last two seasons, but now have a TP52 they are calling *Freccia Rossa* – the red-hulled reigning champion previously raced by Alberto Rossi. So far no other TPs have come out to challenge the French, so for now their regatta will be spent looking at their watches and calculating corrected time.

The next level in this class will be three 42-footers, two GPs and a Hakes 42, who will spar among themselves while also trying to speed away on the downwind legs from the heavier racer-cruisers and older racers – which will always be tough to beat upwind.

The big entry in Class B is a class record, and race managers have been weighing options on how to manage this properly. Rather than a gold-silver fleet division, as tried in Helsinki in 2012, Danish organisers will revert to a single start... which suggests a line around 1km in length. Good for photographers, for sure, while the relative uniformity in this racer-cruiser fleet should keep things close.

In this division the Mills-designed Landmark 43 *Santa* should be a strong contender, but we will also be looking at another Mills design, Sweden's *Datacom*, a MAT 1180 that is much more at the racer end of the spectrum.

Reigning European champion from Estonia, Jaak Jogi's X-41 *Forte*, will be high and fast upwind, while interesting to watch by way of contrast will be the upgraded (see last month) Maurizio Cossutti-designed Next 37 *Mercedes* (left).

Class C at the ORC Worlds has generally been a contentious place with the closest margins in points, but this year there is a wider variety of boat types that will give the ORC system a real workout; racers like the Farr 30s, GP33s and Melges 32s will be mixing it with numerous X-Yachts, Dufours, J Boats and Beneteaus, a straight reflection of what's moored in slips everywhere.

There are, however, a few sharks in this division: there is a Matteo Polli-designed Italia 9.98, sistership to *Low Noise 2*, the reigning Class C world champion, and perennial Class C favourite, Jaan Akerman's *Sugar 2*. It will be interesting to see how the new and old Class C-optimised designs come out of the fray.

Lastly, two weeks before the worlds are the ORC Europeans at the Nautical Club of Thessaloniki in the southeast corner of Greece. Another record turnout of 75 teams includes a first appearance in ORC championship racing of entries from Turkey, Israel and Bulgaria. This is another mixed fleet of production cruiser-racers, with a few old racers including a TP52, GP42, Farr 52 and Farr 45 thrown into the mix.

As you'd expect, look out in Greece for veteran campaigner George Andreadis returning after a long hiatus with *Meliti IV*, his studiously optimised Grand Soleil 42R that won the worlds in Brindisi in 2009. A top team on home turf; maybe not wise to bet against that one. *Dobbs Davis*



The three-times reconfigured Next 37 *Mercedes* – the subject of July's Design feature – has been full circle in sailplan in search of ORC success while juggling class splits. The Maurizio Cossutti design started life using A-sails but on upwind-downwind courses she got killed by older, heavier designs like the X-41; squeezed out upwind and hung out on the wings downwind the outcome was not pretty. Now at the other end of the spectrum and with a bigger rig and more contemporary fin keel, *Mercedes* is seen running deep with a traditional spinnaker pole/symmetric chute plus also a staysail. Sailmakers everywhere are no doubt digging out their best blooper designs...

splits to reflect locally boosted fleets; thus groups can get very large in one class and small or non-existent in others (last year's European championship had to combine Classes A and B due to the small entry in Class A). For someone who worked hard to be competing at the top of Class B and then be faced with having larger Class A boats starting alongside, this may not be attractive.

The Royal Danish YC and Egaa Sailing Club are clearly doing a nice job ahead of this year's worlds with an entry already approaching 150 boats. Racing will be on three course areas, though with the CDL splits the population is again a little imbalanced: 17 boats in Class A, 66 in Class B and 63 in Class C.